

## WHAT IS NETWORKING?

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It is an unfortunate yet popular misconception that networking events are a place to sell your wares and hunt for clients and customers. If you subscribe to this concept, may this article help save you from any disappointments & heartaches and clarify the true and real purposes of a business networking event. NetEvents are NOT your private 'Tupperware party' for leads. They are, however the greatest creations to help expose your business on a one-on-one level and generate solid business relationships that can grow over time.

Networking parties are probably the single most misunderstood activity in the company-building process. To the naked eye, the concept of a "business party" seems like a contradiction-- mixing business with pleasure. But if you ask some of the greatest self-starters out there to share their recipe for success, you'll often hear them give tremendous praise and credit to their business RELATIONSHIPS.

Hence, you must make it your business to START relationships.

Today, networking events or "NetEvents" are the most popular corporate sales and marketing investments and an even more sought-after activity for any professional.

They are commonly sponsored by trade organizations, chambers of commerce and private businesses. Depending on the sponsor or producer, each event can range in size, theme and level of glamour—all instrumental to the success of the overall event.



Typically, the more intimate NetEvents are designed under a warm and friendly atmosphere to instigate people-to-people interaction. A comfortable crowd of 60-80 people is usually the preferred setting, making it easier to approach and hear one another. Where mingling is the art form, the size of the crowd (more often than not) determines the turnout of your performance.

B2B Networking is about seeing what's out there while letting them know that you're ready for business. It's an after-work initiative that brings a limited collection of professionals together that you will probably never get to meet in your daily business routine.



## WHO TYPICALLY ATTENDS

There are so many businesses that thrive on branding, slick advertising campaigns and media exposure. After having invested in mass promotion, their phones just ring off the hook and their doors just swing open full of traffic. But a larger percentage of the business community (typically B2B services) tend to make their mark through the concept of “it’s WHO you know”. These are REFERRAL-based businesses-- the type of service that gets their clients mostly from ‘word of mouth’.

The referral-based business tends to advertise on a ONE-ON-ONE basis. They get leads predominantly by proving themselves to one client who gladly passes your card to others. A referral-based business also thrives from a network of fellow vendors who knows of your work and passes your information along to *their* clients upon request. Lastly, this type of business tends to be sold more successfully on a face-to-face level – perhaps through presentations and personal selection.

Other types of businesses that attend networking events are those that seek out joint venture partnerships, new vendors and business alliances. By initiating what will hopefully turn out as a trusting and longstanding relationships, the only way to find those solid bonds starts in a setting like here.

## WHAT HAPPENS IN A NET EVENT

Any business owner or rep is welcome to attend. Usually, these events take place in a fun and socially uplifting atmosphere- from upscale bars, designer restaurants and social clubs. They usually take place where there’s enough floor space for people to MINGLE and CONNECT. But to mingle is to share—share what you do and hear what they do. The idea is to see if you have any kind of ‘match’—business wise.

A “NetEvent” takes on many of the qualities of a social outing or even a singles bar. Though some personal connections are known to be generated, the idea is to grow your business through creating alliances, lead sharing and referrals and face-to-face exposure where exchanging business cards could mean an opportunity to showcase your business later.

## **YOUR PRESENCE at a NETEVENT**

There is no exact science that triggers the marketing success and connection-building power of an individual. What separates you from another from your field (in many cases) has everything to do with YOU and how YOU represent it. From attorneys to realtors to the office cleaning contactor- it could be your smile, your body language or your sense of humor. But as a



professional, if your business is about people, your style of representation and presence is what counts.

Here are some codes a professional networker goes by:

- 1) **Confidence-** NetEvents are not for the meek or the shy; they are designed for the business professional who is ready to grow. From the moment you walk in, expect all eyes to eventually land on you. Look and conduct yourself as that you are representing a winning business. Before you walk in, take a moment to review who you are, what you do and how confident you feel. In this arena- insecurity stands out!
- 2) **Barometer-** When you walk in, scope the room. Perform a check on how people are mingling. Also feel for the tone and the mood of the place. Even evaluating sound levels will give you an idea as far as what voice level you need to apply to be heard.
- 3) **Visual Check-** Before each event, it's always a good thing to do a mirror check. You have one chance for a first impression so check for loose ends (teeth, breath, a bugger, zipper, your hair etc).
- 4) **Conduct-** never forget... this is *business*. Don't let the ambience of a club or bar pull you into casual or unprofessional behavior. The rhythm of your dialogue may dip in and out of candor—but stay focused on the objectives. This also includes mastering your personal demeanor, style and grace. Hence leave no-no's at home like rudeness, sarcasm, dirty jokes and pick-up lines.
- 5) **Target selection-** Look around and pick who seems interesting. Like you, networkers work on their appearance and their appeal. After a while, you'll build an instinct to identify who is a decision maker, who is a sales rep and who is there just to mingle socially. Similarly, you should never

segregate visually... your next referral may actually come from someone who just happens to have had a bad hair day.

- 6) **Approach tactics-** It is customary to glide into a conversation without force. The best introduction throughout history is always “HI” or “HELLO”... and always with a smile. Never butt in on two people speaking. You may listen in and put on your “that’s interesting” face but never obnoxiously cut into someone’s dialogue.
- 7) **Timing:** limit your conversation to enough time for each person without getting stuck with one person for too long. This is a trap that sometimes happens when people get too chatty about themselves. As part of conduct, know how to gently wind down the dialogue respectfully and end it positively. The objective is to meet, share and exchange contact info.

## **BENEFITS**

If you are in the ‘people’ business, ask yourself “how have you created ALL of your relationships?”. Many of them happened when you least expected – sparked by chemistry, some common element or a comfortable exchange. Usually, the greatest relationships take continued work and are built on strong, vital elements that reinforce continued connection.

NetEvents duplicate the magic of social spark-finding and relationship-building (for business) in a comfortable and safe environment. They are a terrific source for inspiration, fresh ideas and new talent. They are also a central meeting ground to share concepts and exchange experiences and trading solutions.

B2B networking improves business exposure through a face-to-face level. Business card exchange parties have the greatest propensity for increasing your allies, find new partners, connect with the business community and (ultimately) increase your sales.

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